

NEWS RELEASE



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NRCS Announces Haying and Grazing on Indiana Floodplain Easement Acres

INDIANAPOLIS, July 31, 2012 – USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) continues to work to provide as much relief to drought impacted producers as possible. Today, NRCS State Conservationist Jane Hardisty announced that all Indiana counties are eligible for drought haying or grazing on land enrolled in the Floodplain Easement Program.

Easement holders may voluntarily request a modification to their contract to request grazing or forage harvest approval. Program participants that receive prior approval may begin haying or grazing on August 2, 2012.

Livestock producers across the state are facing a lack of feed due to drought conditions. Today's announcement, coupled with the release of certain practices and acres enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program and the Wetland Reserve Program for emergency haying and grazing, provides additional forage opportunities for livestock. "We have made the decision to allow haying or grazing on these lands in response to the tough decisions livestock producers across the state are facing," said Hardisty, "Allowing haying or grazing on easement lands provides more options for these producers."

All haying under drought provisions must be completed by September 1st; while grazing is to be completed by September 30th. Grazing will not be allowed in the same year on the same acreage that is hayed.

The Floodplain Easement Program is a voluntary program that offers landowners the means and the opportunity to protect, restore and enhance lands subject to repeated flooding and flood damage. The purpose of these easements is to restore, protect, maintain and enhance the functions of the floodplain; conserve natural values including fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, flood water retention, ground

water recharge and open space; reduce long-term federal disaster assistance; and to safeguard lives and property from floods, drought and the products of erosion.

Producers interested in haying or grazing of land enrolled in floodplain easements should contact their NRCS District Conservationist at the local USDA Service Center to determine eligibility and submit a Compatible Use Authorization request.

For landowners with land currently enrolled in a floodplain easement, the Compatible Use Authorization process provides NRCS and affected producers the management flexibility to address short-term resource conditions in a manner that promotes both the health of the land and the viability of the overall farming operation. As with all compatible use requests, NRCS has the right to prohibit all haying and grazing unless it will further the protection and enhancement of the wildlife habitat and floodplain functions and values.

Additional program requirements and information about haying and grazing on land in a floodplain easement is available on the Indiana NRCS website at: www.in.nrcs.usda.gov/drought.html or you can visit your local USDA-NRCS field office to talk with staff. Visit www.in.nrcs.usda.gov/contact/directory/field_offices.html to find the nearest USDA Service Center.

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